



**ASSESSING PUBLIC SERVICE QUALITY & SERVICE SATISFACTION:
WITH REFERENCE TO GOVERNANCE IN KARNATAKA, INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Being a democratic country India has brought in various acts and reforms to uphold citizen centricity. Right to service act has been one of such initiatives. As on 2023, the state of Karnataka has been able to provide highest number of services under this act. This study explores and investigates citizen's perspective of service quality & service satisfaction attained by availing the public services. A questionnaire survey was formulated and study found that the five factors 'Reliability' 'Assurance', 'Empathy', 'Valence', and 'Waiting Time' are determinants of the quality of citizen/government services. The outcome indicate that overall service quality has significantly positive impact on service satisfaction. This research is of greater value to scholars who are interested in the area of governance, administration, and service delivery.

KEYWORDS : Service Quality, Governance, Service delivery, Service Satisfaction, Right to Service Act, In-time service delivery

1. INTRODUCTION

Accountable, transparent and responsive administration reflects good governance. Public service delivery has been one of the key functionalities of government. However, providing in-time services with greater service quality has been the need of the hour. Bureaucratic apathy and red-tapism had predominantly hindered the concept of in-time service delivery and good governance. In the year 2011 the government of Karnataka passed the right to service bill which is now popularly known as Sakala. The word Sakala means good/in-time. The Sakala right to service act of Government of Karnataka ensures in-time delivery of government services. However, incases of delayed disposal of service application, applicant can claim compensation for delay upon demand through two tier appeal system. If the designated officer is found to be responsible for the delay in disposal, under such circumstances the paid compensation amount shall be deducted from the salary of the designated officer/public servant. In India as on year 2023, 24 states and 5 union territories have passed the right to service bill. The Government of Karnataka has been leading the right to service accomplishments by delivering 1,181 services through 100 government institutions. However, since the inception of act in Karnataka up to 30 April 2023, the state has rejected 1,92,60,808 applications and delay disposed 1,47,13,117 applications. Hence it becomes crucial to gauge service quality and level of satisfaction attained by citizens.

2. Literature review on service quality & satisfaction

The foundation to understand, measure and improve service quality was laid by the research and study conducted by Shostack (1982, 1984), Gronroos (1984) & Parasuraman et al. (1985). It has been suggested that 'perceived service quality model' replaces the product feature of physical product during consumption of services (Gronroos, 1988). Further two service quality dimensions have been identified by Gronroos, which include the functional aspect involving "how" service has been delivered and technical aspect "what" service has been provided. Consumers perceive what they receive as process outcome of service delivery in which resources have been utilized i.e. technical-dimension of the service quality. At the same time consumers also perceive how the process itself functions, i.e functional or process quality dimension. For some services like that of health care it would be difficult for patient/consumer to evaluate technical dimension of service quality as immediate results of a treatment. The functional

factors like reliability and empathy would be handy under such circumstances.

The dimensions of service quality were synthesized by illustrating the research work on service quality dimensions by Gronroos (1984) and Lehtinen (1982). The important contribution was identification of service quality based on literature study and categorizing then to "what" – service evaluation post its delivery and "how" – evaluation of service during the delivery process. The research work of Swartz (2003) does not reflect the work of Gronroos. Recent conceptualization of service quality has been proposed by Rust and Oliver (1994). The model was a 3-dimensional model which emphasizes on consumer's evaluation of 3 dimensions of the service encounter: a) Customer employee interaction (function quality); b) Service environment and c) outcome (technical quality). The research suggests that service environment affects the perception about service quality (Spangenberg et al., 1996). However, it is not easy to distinguish the notion of service environment from functional quality which has been suggested in the literature. Brady & Cronin (2001) had proposed 4 factors comprising the service environment, facility design, ambient condition and social factors. The explanation stated by Brady & Cronin (2001) tells that service environments are actually the elements of the service delivery system. To summarize it seems favorable to include the elements of service-environment as components of functional dimensions.

Technical quality attributes are least explored (Wilkins et al., 2007; Wu & Ko, 2013; Yu & Ramanathan, 2012). Technical quality dimension has been ignored by most of the research scholars (Ladhari, 2012; Tamwatin et al., 2016). Wu & Ko (2013) suggested 3 dimensions of outcome quality which are: a) Sociability: Behavior of the applicants within the service-setting. b) Valence: Post consumption assessment of service by applicant. c)Waiting time: Time taken by the applicant to avail the service.

Service quality and strategic decision making are inter-related (Cronin & Taylor, 1994).

Very few prominent research has been carried out in the field of public service delivery system (Lee et al, 2011). Hence, there is a need to conduct prominent research on .public service delivery system, the quality of service being delivered and

satisfaction attained by public by availing these services.

3. Research methodology & Data analysis

A survey was used as a tool to collect responses from applicants who had either applied for service or availed service through sakala. As many as 20 variables were included in a survey instrument in order to access the quality of service delivered. These variables were developed and categorized under 5 factors based on various literature review outcome. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used for rating service quality variables. The details of 5 factors and 20 variables mapped to them are provided below.(Table I).

Table I: Details of variables and factors

S.N	Independent variables which constitute factors	Factors which contribute to dimensions of service quality
VAR01	Accuracy at which service is approved	Reliability- Perform promised service accurately and dependably (Parasuraman et al., 1985)
VAR02	Accuracy at which service delivered	
VAR03	Service delivery is reliable	
VAR04	Service delivery instils confidence	
VAR05	Public servants/representatives treated you Chivalrously	Assurance- Courtesy of employees, knowledge and ability to inspire trust and confidence. (Parasuraman et al., 1985)
VAR06	Did you feel safe while doing service transactions	
VAR07	Quality of information communicated by the department	
VAR08	Government's ability to resolve queries	Empathy-Individualized attention provided by firm to customers and care. (Parasuraman et al., 1985)
VAR09	Assistance received while availing service	
VAR10	Sakala delivers services which meet citizen requirements	Valence - It refers to post consumption assessments of whether the service outcome is acceptable or unacceptable. (Wu& Ko, 2013)
VAR11	Sakala understands citizen specific needs	
VAR12	Sakala values interest of citizens	
VAR13	Rate the experience of availing service	
VAR14	Provide rating for department involved in service delivery	
VAR15	Provide rating to public servant/representatives	
VAR16	Promptness of delivered service	
VAR17	Your willingness to re-apply for services	

VAR18	Was the service disposed in promised time	Waiting Time – It refers to the amount of time that customer spend waiting to be served. (Wu& Ko,2013)
VAR19	Accuracy of Sakala in claiming to be a in-time service delivering entity	
VAR20	Rate Sakala as a dependable service delivering system	

a. Data Collection

The sample population were applicants who had applied for public services under right to service act. The respondents belonged to different parts of Karnataka, covering all the districts. Exploratory factor-analysis and Cronbach's-Alpha tests have been conducted to test reliability and consistency of variables. The results are explained in Table II.

Table II. Descriptive statistics, communalities and Cronbach's Alpha values for Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Valence, and Waiting time

Descriptive Statistics of Reliability and Communalities of Reliability							
S.N	Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Initial	Extraction	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
VAR01	Reliability	3.20	1.107	1.000	.799	.894	.916
VAR02		3.26	1.124	1.000	.802	.895	
VAR03		3.21	1.117	1.000	.786	.887	
VAR04		3.29	1.053	1.000	.811	.901	
Descriptive Statistics of Assurance and Communalities of Assurance							
S.N	Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Initial	Extraction	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
VAR05	Assurance	3.26	1.119	1.000	.819	.905	.893
VAR06		3.22	1.088	1.000	.824	.908	
VAR07		3.23	1.100	1.000	.829	.910	
Descriptive Statistics of Empathy and Communalities of Empathy							
S.N	Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Initial	Extraction	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
VAR08	Empathy	3.21	1.089	1.000	.742	.861	.926
VAR09		3.26	1.089	1.000	.789	.888	
VAR10		3.19	1.074	1.000	.779	.882	
VAR11		3.25	1.098	1.000	.779	.883	
VAR12		3.26	1.090	1.000	.771	.878	
Descriptive Statistics of Valence and Communalities of Valence							
S.N	Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Initial	Extraction	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
VAR13	Valence	3.19	1.201	1.000	.803	.896	.930
VAR14		3.20	1.091	1.000	.772	.878	
VAR15		3.17	1.092	1.000	.768	.876	
VAR16		3.29	1.163	1.000	.804	.897	
VAR17		3.31	1.136	1.000	.766	.875	
Descriptive Statistics of Waiting Time and Communalities of Waiting Time							

S.N	Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Initial	Extraction	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
VAR18	Waiting Time	3.25	1.203	1.000	.842	.917	.903
VAR19		3.22	1.131	1.000	.848	.921	
VAR20		3.28	1.118	1.000	.826	.909	

For the factor waiting Time, communalities values have been greater than .5. Component-matrix value squared for an item gives the value of communalities for that item/variable. For the item "Accuracy of Sakala in claiming to be an in-time service delivering entity" component matrix value is of .921, when squared indicates 84.8% of variance in item VAR19 is explained by factor 7 we retained (regression r square is correlation square which indicates the amount of variance which was accounted for). This comes to .848 which is the value of communalities for same item. Similarly, relationship holds good for all the other items.

Factor analysis has been used for to obtain a reduced & simplified set of un-correlated latent variables/items through set of linear-combination of original variables/items which boosts the variances of the components.

For a set of t multivariate variables/items, the model can be expressed as follows:

$$M1-H1 = Q11r1 + Q12r2 + Q13r3 + \dots + Q1nrn + z1 \quad (1)$$

$$M2-H2 = Q21r1 + Q22r2 + \dots + Q2nrn + z2:$$

$$Rt-Ht = Qt1r1 + Qt2r2 + \dots + Qtnrn + zt \quad (2)$$

In the above matrix form, equation (1) can be expressed & written as follows:

$$(M-H)tM1 = QtMHnRnM1 + ztM1$$

Where $n < t$, $M = (M1, M2, \dots, Mt)$ is a multidimensional vector that represents numerous dimensions of quality of service responsible for citizen service-satisfaction in government and $H = (H1, H2, \dots, Ht)$ is correspondent mean vector, $R = (r1, r2, \dots, rt)$ is resulting common factor-vector, $Q = [Qij]tMn$ is matrix of factor loadings, Qij represents the loading of ith variable/item on the jth factor and $Z(z1, z2, \dots, zk)$ is specific error of Ei . R and Z are independent & expected values of $Z(R)$ & $Z(z)$ are 0. Covariance of 'R' is identity-matrix and covariance of 'z' is diagonal-matrix.

Among suitable rotation policy, the study identifies orthogonal varimax-rotation as it helps in optimization of variables with greater loadings on a factor resulting in every variable/item with a single factor. Orthogonal varimax rotation is also helpful in generalizing the research findings which is important during empirical study. The values of factor loadings displayed in table III includes only items which have factor loading values of greater than 0.6. Factor analysis was conducted on 20 variables/items and 5 clusters have been recognized.

For extraction of factorial groups Kaiser criteria (1960) has been adopted. The criteria states that factors with eigen-value greater than one to be accepted. Therefore, factors with eigen-value greater than "1" and their obtained variance value have been provided in Table III.

Table III. Variance Experienced for Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Valence and Waiting Time

Factors	1 (Reliability)	2 (Assurance)	3 (Empathy)	4 (Valence)	5 (Waiting Time)
Variance Experienced (%)	79.951%	82.385%	77.201%	78.253%	83.865%

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the research mean and standard deviation values it is

evident that a larger part of the applicants are satisfied with the quality of service provided by the government.

Among the 5 factors identified in Table I, the factor 'Waiting Time' had a greater impact on acceptance of Government's service delivery. The factor explains 83.865% of the variance. The main purpose of "Right to Service Act" has been in-time delivery of services to its citizens. Government must ensure that waiting time for availing the services are further reduced through periodic business process re-engineering of service delivery process has.

The second factor which has greater impact has been Assurance. This factor explains 82.385% of the variance. The government should initiate work flow-based mapping of services to track the exact reason for delay in service delivery, this will also increase the transparency of service delivery further gaining the public trust.

Valence has been third factor with greater impact. Valence explains 78.253% of the variance. Government must collect citizen feedback related to complexity faced by them while availing the services, based on these feedbacks the changes in existing process and rules to be initiated.

Reliability has been fourth impactful factor, which explains 79.951% of the variance. The whole 'Right to Service Act' speaks about delivering the services in promised time by the government to its citizens. The reason for delays and rejection of applications must be justified by the officials at the time of disposal of services.

The fifth and the last factor to influence service delivery mechanism of Government has been Empathy which explains 77.201 of the variances. Government must introduce online appeal system to fasten the applicant's grievance management process.

By focusing on the above-mentioned factors government can enhance the service delivery mechanism and upgrade the quality of services being delivered, resulting in greater citizen service satisfaction.

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